



An Interview with Warren Farrell

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*Warren Farrell is practically an institution unto himself for the men's movement. Warren started his career as an ardent feminist, writing a book, *The Liberated Man* (1974) that mostly concentrated on how men can support the women's movement. He is the only man to have been elected three times to the Board of the National Organization for Women in New York City.*

*Warren subsequently underwent a transformation of viewpoints and wrote two more books, *Why Men Are the Way They Are* (1986) and the more radical *The Myth of Male Power* (1993), both of which have been of enormous value to men and the men's movement. The New York Post called *Why Men Are the Way They Are* "the most important book ever written about love, sex, and intimacy." He has served on the boards of the profeminist National Organization for Changing Men (now the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS)) and the National Congress for Fathers and Children. Warren is currently finishing up his fourth book, *The Seven Greatest Myths About Men*, scheduled for publication in 1997. He continues a demanding schedule of workshops and speaking engagements to publicize his books.*

Interviewer J. Steven Svoboda is a 36-year-old attorney who has reorganized his work life to allow him to devote the majority of his time to doing men's work. He is writing a book as well as regular articles and letters about men's issues, writing and performing solo theater pieces regarding men's issues, doing legal and human rights work on behalf of men, and helping to organize the work of the new Northern California chapter of the National Coalition of Free Men.

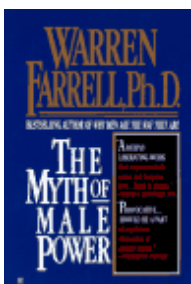
Steven spoke with Warren at Warren's home near San Diego on September 22, 1996. Warren is a remarkably humble and gracious host and interviewee. He has followed his path at tremendous emotional and financial cost to himself, as he alludes to at points in the interview, and yet never does he fall into self-pity. He is an easy man to admire and to like.

Steven: How did you develop your passionate interest in men's issues?

Warren: It evolved from my experience in the fifties, growing up during the McCarthy era, and hearing a lot of assumptions that America was wonderful and Communism was terrible. I was never quite able to believe that one group could be all angels and the other group all devils. I was somewhat astonished that when I spoke to that effect, I was immediately assumed to be a devil.

And then in 1956 or 1957 my family went over to Europe and I moved over with them, and immediately people in Europe thought my perspective on that issue was 100% correct. I was 14 or 15 at the time. So I got reinforcement from that. I mentally registered that maybe my "crazy" ideas weren't so crazy. Throughout my life I have always been amazed that people couldn't listen to other people, that they couldn't hear their best intent, that there seemed to be an enormous need to demonize.

So when the woman's movement surfaced in the late sixties, I was astonished again that everyone was turning it into braburners and couldn't understand the best of what women were saying. And pretty soon I decided that I was so interested in that that I changed my doctoral dissertation topic and I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the political potential of the women's movement as indicated by its ability to effect a change in men's attitudes and behaviors towards women. As I started to do that, I began to realize that writing a dissertation is a little like masturbation; it doesn't communicate with anyone else!



The Myth of Male Power
by Warren Farrell

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Why Men Are the Way
They Are
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So I decided to write a book. The opportunity was created when an academic paper I wrote for the American Political Science Association convention was discovered by the *New York Times*. They asked me to translate it from academic language (the intellectual equivalent of Ebonics) to English. At about the same time I was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Organization for Women in New York City. I started to get very well recognized in the early seventies as the only man in the United States who had been elected three times to the board of NOW in New York City.

Everything went well until the mid-seventies when NOW came out against the presumption of joint custody. I couldn't believe the people I thought were pioneers in equality were saying that women should have the first option to have children or not to have children--that children should not have equal rights to their dad.

Steven: As a former ardent feminist, what is your current view of feminism?

Warren: I'm a 100% supporter of the portions of feminism that are empowering to women and a 100% opponent of the portions that hone victimhood as a fine art. And when I see statistics that men earn a dollar for each 59 cents that women earn--or 76 cents--statistics that are just totally untrue and extremely misleading, or statistics that men batter women more than women batter men, and I explain to feminists why they aren't true, but they cannot even listen, well, it reminds me of what Mark Twain used to say: "Misery loves company but it hates competition." And that sort of defines the feminist movement. It loves the company of people who identify with its victimhood but let anyone add, for example, that men die earlier of all fifteen leading causes of death or that prostate cancer is funded at one seventh the level of breast cancer for almost the same level of deaths, they just go berserk.

Steven: Are there situations in which it's hard to figure out whether the feminist position would support equality or just support women's claims?

Warren: Not too often. I'm almost always able to solve that by one simple test, which is reversing the roles. The only trick there is that you have to know male/female issues well enough to know what a true role reversal is. For example, the equivalent of a woman being treated as a sex object is a man being treated as a success object. So, a man cannot say, "If a woman at work touched me on the rear I'd say 'thank you'; why does she say 'sue you'? The equivalent is a woman taking a man's money, as in going to dinner and expecting to be paid for.

Steven: It's been said, probably by you and by others, that the men's movement is the only revolution in history being sought by a supposedly privileged class. How do we combat this perception?

Warren: In a way, the entire book *The Myth of Male Power* is a 500-page debunking of the myth of men as a privileged class. One section, for example, looks at men as "nigger": all the ways that men are treated as second-class people. So for example, armies usually constitute the underprivileged. Imagine telling women that since 1.2 million American men were killed in war, we're going to have an affirmative action plan to have 1.2 million women killed in war before we ask another man to register for the draft. And all women would register for the draft until then. We'll have women die in war while men stay home and take care of the children. Most women will not say, "Oh, this is wonderful, finally female privilege." And so the problem with men is that we have learned to call things power that any other group would call powerlessness, like getting medals to die

or earning money that somebody else spends while we die sooner than any other group.

What if we sent little girls out on the football field at nine years of age, and told them that they were going to take this little piece of pigskin, and they were going to get concussions, spinal cord injuries, broken noses, kneecap injuries that will last for life, and that if they get the pigskin a hundred yards down the field the boys will love them more?

Steven: What about affirmative action for men as teachers in elementary schools, for example, so that boys can get positive role models which they aren't necessarily getting? Is that an idea that would make sense, do you think?

Warren: It's an idea that makes perfect sense. And it's not only an idea that makes perfect sense, but it's an idea that makes it crystal clear how biased our concept of affirmative action is. It's not affirmative action to help people level the playing field; it is to protect the female and to protect certain minorities but not to protect the areas in which men are the minority. One can make a case that says that since 85% of children being brought up in single family homes are being brought up by women that about 85% of elementary school teachers should be males to balance out the feminization that the boys and girls receive. We're in a very, very dangerous period today. In America and in most of the industrialized world, men are coming to be thought of by feminists in very much the same way that Jews were thought of by early Nazis. The comparison is overwhelmingly scary.

Steven: You have mentioned on that subject that both men and Jews were seen as having all the power and creating all the problems, so that treating them worse was permissible. How do we talk about analogies like this without totally losing people?

Warren: We have to go right to the death issue, because you're talking about people being annihilated because they were Jewish, and I am talking about a million men going to their deaths because they were males. That's called the draft, and it's important for people to hear that we're talking about ways of killing a group of people because they belong to that group and that the death of a Jew is no more precious or less precious than the death of a male. I am a quarter Jewish.

Steven: What about sports? Do you think there is justification to have separate genders in sports?

Warren: With professional sports, you can make an argument for males and females being separated but you cannot make an argument for males and females being separated and being paid equally. No one says, "Very few Jews have been in the NBA, so we're going to have an NBA just for Jewish males and it's important that they are paid equally, otherwise that shows discrimination against Jews." No one would even say that about whites in the NBA. Because whites and Jews are fair enough to say, "Wait a minute. What counts is the qualifications." Feminists have confused opportunity with outcome.

A hundred times more important that what happens on a professional level is what happens in our school system vis a vis sports. I don't think there's anything that is a greater area of discrimination against women today than the fact that nowhere in the world is there a female role model in team sports that more than half of a general audience would recognize. So girls are being deprived of team sport role models. They're not being deprived of individual sport role models. But the value of team sports is much different than almost

anyone knows. The feminists often say men are so preoccupied with competition; look at their preoccupation with competitive sports. Totally incorrect. Men's competitive team sports focus on the balance between individual achievement and team achievement with the emphasis on team achievement. There is never a single move that you should make in a team sport that puts the individual before the team and if you do that you are ostracized by the team.

The second point from team sports that is almost always missed is the ability to separate the issue from the friendship. I slide into second base, you tag me out. I call myself safe, you call me out. I say you're blind, you tell me I'm blind. I'll say afterward, Steven, want to go out for a drink? And the next day, I'm second base and you're shortstop, I'm throwing the ball over to you, we're cooperating, and we together are calling somebody else out, who's calling us blind. Where we stand depends on where we sit. And if two lawyers are arguing in a court and they're full of insults and they go out and they play golf or tennis together, women look at that and they go "What? You were just castigating his evidence. He's defending someone who was a criminal. You are the angel." And we understand there aren't angels and criminals. There are gray lines to everything.

Men are often a lot less vindictive than women are, because we are rejected constantly every day. Learning to handle rejection is a part of every man's life a thousand times a year and he begins to learn the basic rule, which is that if you stand out you will be a home run king but you will also be a strikeout king. Babe Ruth was both and most men who succeed are.

Steven: It's a very interesting analogy that you draw there between men being rejected and men being used to team sports and used to this idea that you compete with someone and then you go out for a drink with them. Where do you see that difference coming from primarily?

Warren: I think it comes from team sports from lots of risk taking and rejection. And the good news for men is that we learn to handle rejection a lot better than women do. The bad news is that we pay a price for that handling of rejection, which is the covering up of our sensitivities and the discounting of our feelings. It's sort of like we have a scab over our rejected areas and we compensate for that by having to succeed because we learn that success is the best preventive medicine against the cancer of female rejection, against the cancer of our parental disapproval, against the cancer even of our children thinking that we're wonderful.

Steven: Unfortunately not against the cancers that kill us earlier.

Warren: Very frequently not.

Steven: Do you think that there might be differences in our evolutionary roles as compared to women which might have made a difference in our attitude toward competitive sports, or do you think it more has to do with our socialization?

Warren: No, it definitely has to do with our evolutionary roles. In fact, the socialization gives us the tools to fill our evolutionary roles. They are our building blocks. The reason you played sports like bullfighting and had gladiators is you were telling men you would praise them if they learned how to risk their life and still perform. And those that succeeded were your best protectors and so you had to get men to call it power to have the concussion or the spinal cord injury. So you would socialize them to be disposable. And the reason the subtitle of *The Myth of Male Power* is *Why Men Are the Disposable Sex* is because everything in that book is a counter to the belief that

men have the privilege. It is saying rather that privilege was the reward for sacrifice and privilege was the reward for disposability. If you were willing to sacrifice yourself, you would be called a hero. The Greek word for hero was "serow," from which we get our words servant, slave, and protector. All come etymologically out of the word hero. This tells in one word the entire story of masculinity.

Steven: While it's been said that men oppress women but men are oppressed by society, I personally am not convinced that there's any difference. What do you think?

Warren: Men don't oppress women any more than women oppress men. The whole concept of men and women oppressing each other is ridiculous. That's a fabrication of the feminist movement. What is true is that both sexes have roles that can legitimately be considered oppressive, but those roles are not roles designed by men or women, they were designed by biological necessity and the necessity of survival. Survival was the oppressor. And in order to survive, you didn't teach people to focus on rights, you taught them to focus on responsibilities, you taught them to focus on obligations, which is why our grandparents listening to this discussion would be disgusted with us. And you have a nation of victims rather than a nation of entrepreneurs because you're focused on competing to be a better victim.

The biology of women in a survival-focused world was the childraising and that left the social role of men to raising the money to support the biological role of women. And it's not been until industrialized societies had enough income to help society progress from what I call a Stage 1, which is survival-focused to Stage 2, which is focused on the balance between survival and self-fulfillment, that we could produce people who were able to focus on what rights and opportunities they had.

But men did not have it all figured out and have a system of rules designed to oppress women. You could make a case that women taught men to play the role of chauffeur in life, that women sat in the back seat as mother and told us in the front seat in the uniforms to drive and we figured out the best way to get there without asking directions and the woman just fired us if we didn't do it right and continued to employ us if we did it right. You could make a case that women addicted men to their sexuality and then withdrew their sexuality until we provided them with a source of income. You could make a case that women figured out a way of brainwashing boys to earn money that the women spend to have better homes while we live out in the mines and construction sites and kill ourselves. You could do that but that would also be an incorrect masculinization and demonization of the female role. The truth is that neither sex had power. Both sexes had roles. Rather than raise children, men's role was to raise money. When you have a role, you have an obligation, you don't have power. Power is the ability to control your own life.

Steven: So how do we carry on a dialogue about men's rights in a society that's so focused on victimization?

Warren: First you focus on equality and you say we have a 14th Amendment that says that it's a violation of the Constitution to protect one group--one sex, one race--more than the other. You start with something as simple as why do we register eighteen- year-old boys for the draft. You ask questions like that. Then we look at some of the crucial issues like why is it that judges will award custody 90-95% of the time to the female. Is this equal protection for the males that want it? You then ask questions like, when our taxpayer dollars are being spent on health for women and men, why is it that in 1920 men only died one year earlier than women and now we're dying

seven years earlier? Shouldn't we put money into men's and women's health until men and women are dying about equally?

We start saying that the school system has been focusing on helping girls in math because they had been doing worse in math than they used to. Now they're doing just about as well in math as boys are. That's terrific. Now why aren't we doing the same thing for boys around reading, around the dropout rate, around attention deficit disorder, around the use of drugs like Ritalin? Why is it that we have a school system that's female-focused and female-run at the elementary school level in particular?

Why is it that we have a women's birth control pill and not a men's birth control pill? Can you imagine what the feminists would be doing if we had a men's birth control pill and not a women's birth control pill? And if men said, "It doesn't make any difference. If I tell you I'm on the pill, I'm on the pill, and you can trust me." They would be saying, "You must be kidding." Yet we as men are expected when a woman says, "Trust me" to trust her even though she can be saying she is on the pill and not be, and when she discovers herself pregnant, she can either tell us or not tell us, she can get an abortion or not get an abortion, she can raise the child alone for 18 years oftentimes in many states and tell us retroactively and we are retroactively responsible for child support.

So we've moved from an era when women's biology was women's destiny to today, which is an era in which men's biology is men's destiny.

Steven: Some of the ways you're phrasing these issues sound so commonsensical. Do we have some peculiar blind spot regarding gender issues and if so why would that be?

Warren: The blind spot is our biology which taught us to protect women and to sacrifice ourselves if we have to. Men and women have been trained biologically and through socialization to consider a woman's life as more sacred. The reason for that is that women were the bearers of children and you could lose a man and as long as you had a few men around you could impregnate a lot of women but you could only produce so many children and so the women were protectors of their children and the men played their role of competing against each other to be the great protector. We had to train ourselves to be disposable and women for generations after generations selected for men who were the officer and the gentleman, not the conscientious objector. The conscientious objector was the person who valued himself too much to be able to die in war. Forty studies have been produced now showing that women batter men and men batter women equally. No one is even willing to look at them, much less believe them, even though half of them were done by women and most of them were feminists, and so no matter what you say, it's very difficult to penetrate the mentality of that.

Steven: Lately I've been hearing a fair amount of talk about identical rights as opposed to equal rights, the idea being that the equal rights idea, as you've just mentioned, gets changed into unequal rights with the idea of remedying past inequities. How do you feel about that distinction?

Warren: The way to test for whether you're being fair is that you ask yourself questions like, "If we have affirmative action to help women in areas in which in the past they have been discriminated against, do we have affirmative action in the areas in which men in the past have not had an equal opportunity?" Are we going out there with special scholarships to give boys to be elementary school teachers? Same thing with flight attendants. Same thing with cocktail waiters.

Same thing with prostitutes. Why aren't we giving men the opportunity to be prostitutes and make the same amount of money as women as often? I'm being a little tongue in cheek about prostitutes but not completely because it's wrapped into some deeper issues. But on the elementary school teacher level, it's absolutely crucial. Are we giving fathers special training to be fathers, not just paternity leaves that are equal to maternity leaves, but why not give men twice as much money for paternity leaves? Make a matching program for men so that a corporation contributes a certain amount and the government contributes an equal amount so that the courses men take on relationships and on family would be tax deductible? And I could go on and on.

Nobody really believes in equality anyway. For example, if we really believed in equality we'd be paying about two to three times as much for each house as we pay. Because if we really believed in equality of outcome we would say that fifty percent of the people building our homes have to be women. You know what it would take cost-wise to get a woman to sacrifice her life to the degree that construction workers do? There are construction workers killed every single workday hour in the United States. It would take much more excruciating safety standards. Rafters would practically be in glass so the women couldn't get hurt. We would have to pay women so much more for the rest of their life that the cost of housing would soar. And we probably would pay almost twice as much for housing as we currently do, especially for the building of skyscrapers.

Steven: Can we promote any men's issues as also women's issues?

Warren: All women's issues are to some degree men's issues and all men's issues are to some degree women's issues because when either sex wins unilaterally both sexes lose. So when you look at battered women and you don't look at battered men, then you conclude from seeing only the battered women that women are battered by men as an outcome of male privilege and power. And you don't see that the person who does the battering is acting out a momentary experience of power to compensate for the powerlessness that they're experiencing. Which is why poor people batter more than well-educated people.

Once I was in a relationship with a female therapist who said, "I know you're not the violent type but every time I get into a relationship with a man I always make it clear at the beginning that no matter how long we've been together, if you ever hit me just once, I will leave that relationship." And I said, "That's very sad to me. I'm unlikely to ever hit you. But it saddens me to no end that we could build a thirty-year marriage with lots of love and children, etc. and something would happen one day and I would hit you and you would leave without regard for everything we have built together." And she said, "Well, why does that bother you? You know that ahead of time. You just have to not do it." And I said, "Because I could get you to hit me within 48 hours even though you know ahead of time that I'm going to get you to do that and I can get you to do that without ever touching you." And she said, "That's not true." And I said, "One dollar." And she said, "OK."

So we had a one dollar bet on whether I could get her to do it in 48 hours. During the first 24 hours I tried once and she saw through it. And in the 46th hour I got unreasonable with her verbally, meaning that she would say something and I would distort what she would say, and she would try to clarify it and I would distort it again and then attack her based on the distortion. I knew which buttons to push by that point in our relationship and she got so caught up in it that she whanged out and slapped me and I said, "One dollar please." And she said, "Oh, you bastard" and almost hit me again. It was really funny. But she has said to me a few times since that it was one of the best

things I ever did for her. It really helped her in therapy to work much more effectively with the dance of powerlessness that verbal battery can create that makes physical battery a much more likely outcome.

Steven: Let's talk about your books. Your first book was profeminist but didn't speak to men's issues as such. *The Myth of Male Power* is probably more radical than *Why Men Are The Way They Are*. Will your next book continue this progression of stepping out further on behalf of men?

Warren: It will continue that, yes, and it will take the seven issues that are the most misunderstood, the most believed, that are causing the most damage, like the belief that men earn more money than women do for the same work, the belief that men batter women more than women batter men, and basically leave the reader who reads them unable to argue against the facts.

Steven: A lot of men in the men's movement feel there's grounds for great optimism that real change is coming. More and more men and women seem to be recoiling from the greatest excesses of feminism in the 70's and 80's. Yet the pace of change can seem so glacial sometimes. What are your thoughts about how quickly we can hope to start moving toward true equality?

Warren: A very long time, because if you were to ask the question, can we hope for men to change as quickly and make as much progress in the next twenty-five years as women did in the last twenty-five years, the answer is no. And the reason is that women complaining is not an evolutionary change. Men complaining is an evolutionary change. Women asking for men to protect them and therefore for the government to become the substitute husband when women don't get the protection of men is evolutionarily very natural. Men saying, "I need protection, I need help, please help me," is not natural.

Steven: Was there any difference in the feminist reaction to *Why Men Are the Way They Are* versus *The Myth of Male Power*?

Warren: Yes. *The Myth of Male Power* dealt much more with the political issues, the legal issues, sexual harassment, date rape, women who kill, and those issues were very much more interfaced with the agendas of feminism. *Why Men Are the Way They Are* was basically ignored by feminists. With *The Myth of Male Power*, I was actively opposed by feminists.

Steven: Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Warren: With *The Myth of Male Power*, NOW and the feminist men like Michael Kimmel called up to TV shows in the United States and Canada and from what I heard from producers that leaked this to me, said things like, "Warren Farrell recommends rape and incest and he will set feminism back twenty years and if you produce a show with him, don't expect us to be recommending books from feminists in the future to you."

I did two articles that were accepted for *Modern Maturity*, one of the largest circulation magazines in the US. After the articles were accepted, edited and paid for, one feminist researcher objected to them and got *Modern Maturity* to drop both articles. And regarding the places like the *New York Times* in which I had published every single thing I had written when I was a feminist, since I have questioned feminism nothing I have written has been published. When I was doing the Donahue Show as a feminist, I was on seven times. I was on once where I deviated from the feminist position and I was never invited back.

Steven: What evidence did they have that supposedly you were promoting incest or rape? Was there any evidence of that?

Warren: None whatsoever except that I mentioned both words. The incest thing was very ridiculous because I just made an analogy about workplace sex being incestuous. I said that when colleagues in the same company have sex together, it was like people in the same family having sex together. And they took that and said I was recommending incest. It really shocked me that the producers didn't read for themselves what was being said. And with the rape, I was showing why the rape statistics are exaggerated, and saying that date rape was much more complex than the way feminists had portrayed it, as men oppressing women.

Steven: It seems that the normal collegial intellectual debate parameters are completely outlawed with certain feminist ideas.

Warren: Yes, absolutely.

Steven: I've often thought that the men's movement ought to be entitled to the same sort of latitude a lot of us have given the women's movement, in other words, we ought to have a right to have our Mary Dalys and Andrea Dworkins who go overboard and create space for the Gloria Steinems and Betty Friedans. If you had to place yourself somewhere on the spectrum as a men's writer and activist, where do you see yourself?

Warren: Let me add a couple of things to those descriptions of women. Gloria Steinem is in the camp today of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon and Mary Daly. She much more identifies with that than with the camp of Betty Friedan. Gloria Steinem is very anti-male in her vocabulary even though she's a wonderful human being. The opposite is true of Betty Friedan, who's a terrible human being but is a very thoughtful person who understands that men have issues of transition as well. The other person in that radical camp who is often skipped over is Valerie Solanas who wrote the book *Society for Cutting Up Men: SCUM Manifesto*. And her significance is quite great in the sense that she is the person that shot Andy Warhol and she is the person who is now having biographies made of her and being celebrated. For the film biography of Andy Warhol, she was interviewed as one of the experts ON Andy Warhol after having shot him and ended his effective life. So this is the celebration of a male killer. Because it wasn't just Andy Warhol; she tried to kill a couple of other men as well.

Where would I put myself on that scale? I hope I'm a more original thinker than Betty Friedan has come to be, but at least I think of myself more as putting out ideas that are not ready to be heard that when looked at, people are never quite sure whether they're revolutionary or just common sense. The sad thing is that they're both revolutionary and common sense. What I do in my writing is try to say things that are quite radical and about as radical as can be accurately backed up. So what I try to do in my writing is say exactly what needs to be said with no holds barred except with a few holds barred in the area of sexuality, which is more than most people can handle, and yet say it with love and compassion and with consideration of women that is equal to my consideration of men. I hope my personality is more like Gloria's and my thinking is more like Betty's.

Steven: It seems to me that when I talk about men's issues apart from the company of women, they often get what I'm talking about. To what extent do you think men who aren't in fear of women's reaction can grasp and acknowledge our oppression, our problems?

Warren: To the extent that a man exists who is not in fear of a woman's reaction, they can get a grasp of our problems pretty well. But try to find a man who's not in fear of women's reactions. You are looking for a needle in a haystack. The only men who aren't in fear of women's reactions are usually men who aren't born or who are dead. (Laughter)

Often the heterosexual male is very, very disconnected from his own abilities to get support from other men and so therefore very frequently all his emotional eggs are in the basket of females and the result of that is that all you have to do is begin to withdraw from him and he will just shut up.

Steven: It sounds as if you feel that there's a relationship between homophobia and anti-male sexism.

Warren: Homosexual men have different reasons for not standing up for these issues, the main one of which is that the political atmosphere of the gay community is politically left and has bought that men are the oppressors and women are the oppressed. Gay men have identified with the model of oppressors and oppressed as two opposing groups. And since the laws are seen as written mostly by heterosexual males, they see the heterosexual male as being the oppressor. And the gay male has not had the life experience that a woman can get just about anything she wants from a man if she's attractive and she smiles and flirts properly.

Steven: Is there any connection between what I believe is our greater fear of male homosexuality versus female and anti-male sexism that you can see?

Warren: Our main reasons for fearing males having sex with males is that you really had to construct a more powerful social role to keep men in their place than you did to keep women in their place. The biological role of women having children was fairly natural. But the fact that one act of heterosexual sex could lead to eighteen years of responsibility versus one act of male- male sex leading to zero years of responsibility made heterosexuality a pretty bad deal. And so [male] homosexuality, to the extent it was permitted, would undermine the mentality of unquestioning obligation. As I point out in *The Myth of Male Power*, even the Bible is far more preoccupied with immortality issues than it is with morality issues.

Steven: Often men's rights get portrayed as anti-woman. If you're asked whether you favor taking away from woman to give to men, what do you say?

Warren: I know of almost no case in which you have to take away from women to give to men. If you work on creating a battered man's shelter and recognizing that men are battered as often as women, you don't take away from women, you start reaching out toward helping men, and you work on a totally different solution to battering, and that solution becomes one that teaches people how to hear each other effectively in love relationships rather than distort what the other person says and set up the conditions for battery.

The feminists are saying that whatever battering occurs must be a man's fault because it's a patriarchy and a male dominated system so that anything the male does is an outgrowth of his power and anything a female does is an outgrowth of her powerlessness. That model prevents you from having a system model that says that if you teach both actors in the system a better way of communicating more lovingly and empoweringly to each other, then there will be less battery and that's what we care about. So the current feminist solution often produces lose-lose situations when in fact we should be looking for win- win situations.

Steven: The argument I face sometimes is based on a hypothesis that there's a fixed amount of money to fight issues of either gender. And so the argument is well, are you proposing to take away from women to give men more?

Warren: And the reason that is ridiculous is because if you're approaching a problem with a lose-lose situation, you're creating a bigger and bigger problem. And if you approach a problem with a win-win situation you get a smaller and smaller problem. So the ideal is to not have any money go towards these issues because we'll no longer have an issue. And the measurement of how much we're doing to help the society is not how much money we spend on the problem but how much we reduce the problem. And we reduce almost all male-female problems by working on both the female and the male. And that usually means having both sexes take responsibility.

Steven: On another hot topic, rape, your talk of male-only draft registration and combat requirements amounting to legal rape of men intrigues me. You also talk of false rape accusations as constituting a form of rape. Rape is such an explosive issue and it's one that women seem to own despite the fact that more men may be raped than women if you consider prison rapes. Can you use this sort of explosive language and get away with it?

Warren: I think it's important that we do because I won't get away with it in the beginning. At first people are [saying], (mock outrage) "What? How can you?"

But I approach it by saying let's look at what makes rape such a tough issue for women. And if I'm working a workshop we list on the board all the things that make rape a tough issue: like humiliation, feeling invaded, feeling violated, feeling like no one will believe you, feeling like you're a disgrace, not feeling that anything is sacred.

And so I ask the participants: imagine that you were a pillar of respect in the community and someone falsely accused you of molesting children that you were working with. Let's see what you would feel. "No one would believe me." Totally humiliated. Nowhere to go. Violated for sure. Even the people that you love think that you are now a devil.

People who are raped do not have everybody around them thinking that they are horrible and a devil. They may at the worst suspect that they had a little something to do with the rape but they would never think that they are horrible, terrible people. But these men falsely accused of rape or molesting children are often wiped out to such a degree that they often commit suicide. The number of women committing suicide after being raped is I'm sure considerably lower than the rate of suicide among people who are falsely accused.

Steven: One issue that I've personally analogized to rape is circumcision because it seemed to me like something that you're aware of and get reexposed to every day of your life. I wonder if you have any thoughts about why this is still happening after the documentation that's come out about what a loss it is for men. Why is this still going on?

Warren: For the same reason I mentioned before about protection. Our role as men was to prepare ourselves to be able to experience pain and call pain glory. Not only in football but when James DeMeo did cross-cultural studies that I talk about in *The Myth of Male Power*, one of his findings was that the more a society was preparing warriors, the later in life it did its circumcision and the more cruel the circumcision was and the less likely it was to use anesthesia. The male was not only supposed to in some societies experience at the age of twelve or so his penis being cut but he was supposed to cut it

himself and if he was to make the transition into manhood, which was an initiation rite, he was supposed to not grimace as he cut himself.

So that's circumcision taken to its extreme. And the purpose was to prepare a man to be able to handle pain in the area that was at the essence of masculinity. Handling pain and even smiling through it marked the ultimate man. And that in my opinion is the ultimate in stupidity.

Steven: Let's talk a bit about the "men's movements." The mythopoetic and masculist men's movements often seem very separate to me with little thematic or personal overlap in terms of the people who are involved in them. Are these really two separate movements or is there some way that they relate and can reinforce each other?

Warren: Well, they basically are two separate movements in their current form but they're not really two separate movements and they shouldn't be, and they can both help each other. Most men's issues people should be more involved in the introspective dimensions that are encouraged by the mythopoetic movements, particularly getting in touch with what I call their two F's, their fathers and their feelings. That movement leads naturally into the fathers' rights movement.

When a man is able to connect with his feelings, he is able to care more. When he is able to connect with the father that was missing, he's able to both care more and recognize the importance of being a good father. When you care about being a good father, you start caring more about your own children and the type of father you are. And that leads into worrying about the rights that you have to not lose your parental connection to your children and before you know it you're into the fathers' rights movement.

Steven: What do you think of the Promise Keepers?

Warren: Well, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that it's the largest group of men in the country that are being encouraged to talk about their feelings, to get together in groups, to talk about family, to talk about relationships, and all of that is good good good good good. And the bad news is that almost all Promise Keepers are Christians or born-again Christians who believe that God intended men to be wallets and women to be child-raisers and protectors.

The difficulty with women raising the children and men raising the money, is that there's a contradiction of outcomes. We are telling men to be more involved with their family but then we're telling them to earn all the money for their family, which takes them away from the family. And so the man becomes a bread-winning machine. So the difficulty of the Promise Keepers is that it creates what I call in *The Myth of Male Power* the male tragedy or the male Catch-22: the more effectively he fulfills God's role of providing for his family, showing his love by providing for the family, the more he's away from the family he loves.

Steven: I've noticed in talking about men's issues that ways to cut off a dialog without having to think about the issue have been developed for almost every men's issue. The draft--men conduct all the wars anyway. Divorce and custody--men abandon their children and don't want to parent anyway. Men die younger--it's their fault for keeping their feelings bottled up. Circumcision--what about female genital mutilation, which is worse? Prostate cancer vs. breast cancer--but isn't all medicine for males? What do we do to avoid being ambushed by these questions?

Warren: We present the answers to these questions. We take them as opportunities. We say, let's look at the issue of men causing all the wars. Let's reverse that. Suppose we said to women, "Women, you are obligated to register for the draft at the age of eighteen before the age of consent and before you have the vote. And then when you go out and get a spinal cord injury from a shot through your back that makes you a paraplegic for life, we say, 'Ha, you caused the wars, you're a woman. Margaret Thatcher was in power and she sent you and all the other women to war.' How would you feel?" And that usually stops them in their tracks. So 90% of the time the best answer is to reverse the roles.

Steven: Just before I got on the plane to come down here, I read about a male adolescent who was raped by a female and some statements that were made in court by the judge that a terrible experience can have its pleasant aspects and that his passivity justified the rape. We're talking about a 16-year-old boy who was raped by a 29-year-old-woman. What can we say in the face of such monumental callousness and double standards?

Warren: Reverse the roles. This is a perfect thing for you as a performance artist, to do a whole dialog about a woman who was raped and is being told, "Oh, you probably enjoyed it."

Steven: Are we bad people if we don't put the toilet seats down after we piss?

Warren: Oh my god. Any man that doesn't put the toilet seats down after he pisses should probably either get life imprisonment or be executed immediately. It's difficult to know which is the best solution for him. (laughter)

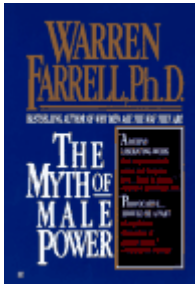
Steven: What can masculists learn from feminists?

Warren: First we can learn not to be masculists. Because basically either one is usually a form of sexism. I say that a little in hesitation, because I do believe that it's valuable for a period of time to focus on those types of issues that have limited women but as long as you're equally focusing on those types of issues that have historically limited men. So the main thing that we can do is learn to present those issues and see if we can do it without demonizing women in an equal and opposite way.

I remember when I was on the board of NOW, lots of women I loved and cared for that were feminists would say, "Gee, Warren, it's so hard, if I say what I believe I could lose my job or my husband or be ridiculed." And yet they said what they believed. They took those risks. Not all of them, but a significant enough group. Now granted, it's a whole lot easier to hear a woman who's playing victim than it is to hear a man who's playing victim. There's nothing in the culture that is more reprehensible than a man who's playing victim even if he is a victim. But it's exactly for that reason that we need the men's movement. So I believe that men's issues do need to be presented by the men's movement for a period of time but that we try never to lose sight of the fact that we're all in this together and we have to always make sure that we are creating solutions that produce love in the long run if not the short run and at the same time we do need to say what our issues are and that's going to produce

people verbally battering us for a period of time until those issues get heard.

Warren Farrell Audio Tapes



The Myth of Male Power

Review



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